

UEC Lobbying

September 16 - 17, 2003

The UEC is vigorously continuing its lobbying efforts to increase the budget of the Office of Science at the Department of Energy, which funds the operation of the four DOE-run synchrotrons, and thus increase funding for the light sources. The feedback we are getting is overwhelmingly positive, owing largely to these grassroots efforts. During our spring visit, Richard Mertens, the Chief of the Energy Branch at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) invited us, representatives from the four synchrotrons, to return in September to update him and make our case once again before they start working (in earnest) on the 2004 budget. Simon Bare and Leemor Joshua-Tor represented the NSLS during the visit on September 16-17. We came to realize that this would be a tough budget year, but we stressed the crucial need for an investment in the physical sciences, and the importance of an efficient and productive operation of the light sources facilities for future growth of the economy. The point was made that nearly 50% of growth of the U.S. economy in the last 50 years was due to Federal investment in scientific and technological innovation and that, now more than ever, we must not let that falter. We also explained that, because of essentially flat funding for operational support for the synchrotrons for more than a decade, the DOE is not getting its full return on its investment since the synchrotrons are not utilized to their full potential. We took this opportunity to meet with

other officials, such as Kathie Olsen, the new Associate Director for Science, and Michael Holland, a senior policy analyst, at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). We also met with professional staff members of the energy subcommittee of the House Committee on Science. We expressed our enthusiasm for the "Biggest Bill" (HR 5270) in the House, which calls for a substantial increase in funding for the Office of Science of the DOE. Though there appears to be sympathy for our mission, we as a user community cannot be complacent at this time.

We also visited the offices of Senators Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer and the office of Congressman Felix Grucci. We presented each of them with a framed photograph of the NSLS with a personalized dedication from the NSLS users thanking them for their support.

Our trip ended with a meeting with Ray Orbach, the Director of the Office of Science, and Pat Dehmer, the Associate Director of Science for Basic Energy Sciences at the DOE. We updated them on our visits and discussed other issues important to users such as the PRT/CAT issue and plans for upgrades. We also wanted to ensure that our lobbying efforts would indeed benefit our users.

-Simon Bare